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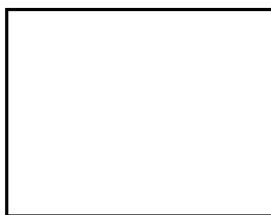
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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Wednesday 10 May 1978

CG NIDC 78/109C



NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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State Dept. review completed

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Wednesday, 10 May 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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SYRIA-LEBANON: Problems Continue

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[] Syria is urging Lebanese President Sarkis to include the leader of the pro-Syrian Lebanese Baath Party in the new cabinet that Prime Minister designate Huss is trying to form. The Syrians are wary of the declaration of principles endorsed by the Lebanese Parliament last month that calls for restrictions on the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

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[] Syria has been pressing Sarkis to have Baath leader Assam Qansu and perhaps other pro-Syrian Lebanese brought into the new government. Sarkis accepted the resignations of Prime Minister Huss and the cabinet in mid-April, but later called on Huss to form a new cabinet. Several small pro-Syrian Lebanese parties, such as the Baath, were not represented in the old cabinet. The Syrians would like to use Qansu to influence the Lebanese Government, which they believe is swayed by Christian interests. The controversy over Qansu--he is opposed by the Christian rightists--is apparently a major issue preventing Huss from naming a new cabinet.

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[] The US Embassy in Damascus believes the Syrians are ambivalent about the Lebanese Parliament's declaration of views on the Palestinian presence. While Damascus welcomes any signs, such as the declaration, of Lebanese reconciliation that might permit Syria to withdraw troops from the country, the Syrians are unenthusiastic about the declaration's provision for disarming the Palestinians. They fear that any Lebanese effort to enforce this provision could spark a major crisis in which they would have to choose sides.

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[] The US Embassy sees little likelihood that Syria will be willing to rein in the fedayeen in the absence of major Palestinian provocations. []

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[] Syria is also encouraging some Christian leaders to keep National Liberal Party leader Camille Shamun and other hard-liners from sparking a renewal of fighting. Nonetheless, the clashes in Beirut last weekend suggest that more skirmishes between Christian militiamen and Syrian troops are likely. []

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ITALY: Consequences of Moro's Death

25X1 [] *The murder of Aldo Moro opens a new period of uncertainty in Italy. The government has won a negative victory by remaining firm, but the Red Brigades are untouched and can be expected to strike again. Maneuvering to take the power seat Moro occupied will break out in the open almost immediately.*

25X1 [] The government regarded its firmness as the only possible course, but this has caused considerable bitterness. Moro's family refuses to permit a state funeral and objects to the participation of state functionaries in a public commemoration. The Red Brigades did not achieve their apparent goal of provoking the government into an indiscriminate roundup of extreme leftists--and thereby causing an antigovernment backlash--but the security situation cannot be expected to improve rapidly, and Italy waits for the terrorists to strike again.

25X1 [] A major unknown is the public reaction to the murder. Although initial reports speak of a nationwide shock wave, only revulsion on the part of the radical groups that aid the Red Brigades would reduce the potential for further terrorism--and this seems unlikely.

25X1 [] Political maneuvering to fill the power vacuum left by Moro's death has already begun, although the exact lineup of contenders is unclear. It is also uncertain whether any grouping will coalesce around a policy of trying to halt the Communist Party's move toward full governmental power. Having taken a firm and responsible position against negotiating with terrorists, the Communists are presumably in a strong position. The likelihood of more terrorism poses the need for strong and united government, and it is doubtful that any Christian Democratic government can do without the Communists.

25X1 [] The provincial elections in small towns that will take place Sunday will be watched closely for indications of the public mood and for signposts of what can be done next.

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USSR-SUDAN: Ambassador Returning

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[] The Soviets have decided to send their Ambassador back to Sudan after a year's absence. They are responding to recent indications by the Sudanese of willingness to normalize bilateral relations. //Ambassador Fedotov was recalled last June after a series of measures taken against the Soviets in Sudan by President Numayri, who charged that they were supporting a Libyan-Ethiopian plot to overthrow him. Fedotov's return, however, does not indicate that Soviet-Sudanese relations will improve significantly.//

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[] In spite of their continued hostility toward each other, both the USSR and Sudan have reason to want normal relations. Concerned by what he perceives as a combined threat against him, Numayri has moved in the past year to disarm his opponents. He has sought reconciliation with domestic opposition groups and has moved to improve relations with Libya and Ethiopia. He has also tried to mediate between Libya and Chad in order to defuse the Libyan-backed rebellion in northern Chad, which he perceives as a threat to the stability of the region.

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[] The return of the Soviet Ambassador probably does not portend a significant improvement in relations. Although Numayri's most recent public criticism of the USSR was more restrained than usual, he has continued to attack the Soviets for their policies in North Africa. He almost certainly remains convinced that the USSR, in league with Libya, seeks to encircle Sudan and overthrow him.

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[] //For their part, the Soviets undoubtedly would applaud the downfall of Numayri. They have seen their position in Sudan deteriorate gradually after 1971, when the Sudanese Communist Party participated in a coup attempt against Numayri, and precipitately after the Libyan-backed attempt to overthrow Numayri in July 1976.// []

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AFGHANISTAN: Food Crisis

25X1 [] *Afghan President Taraki is apparently instituting a grain distribution plan in order to offset food deficits in rural areas. Such a plan might meet the immediate food needs of the rural poor and could win some popular support for the new regime.*

25X1 [] Last Thursday, a government radiobroadcast ordered all individuals who own grain products to turn them over to the government "to meet the needs of the people." Because food prices have risen approximately 10 percent, the government action might be an attempt to stop food speculation.

25X1 [] On the other hand, inadequate rainfall last year has reduced wheat production and caused shortages of food and livestock feed in some areas. In other areas, there is increasing hunger, and livestock conditions in the northern part of the country are said to be very poor.

25X1 [] To date, the international response in food aid has not met Afghanistan's projected needs, perhaps because government estimates are too high. The Afghans may see the food shortage as an opportunity to demonstrate their concern for the population. During an extensive food shortage in 1971 and 1972, an emergency government program for food distribution helped alleviate the problem. []

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BURMA-BANGLADESH: Refugee Problem

25X1 [] *Burma's efforts to root out illegal residents living along its border with Bangladesh have resulted in a flow of refugees into Bangladesh that has complicated bilateral relations and could lead to increased tension.*

25X1 [] The Burmese Government has been conducting citizenship checks throughout the country since March. It asserts that 75,000 Muslims of Bangladeshi origin are residing illegally in Arakan State, about one-half of them recent arrivals. These include some who fled Bangladesh in 1971 during that country's war with Pakistan. Representatives of UN organizations who visited the refugee camps in Bangladesh last weekend support the statements of the Bangladesh Government that 70,000 refugees have been registered so far and that 20,000 to 30,000 others remain to be registered.

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[] The Bangladeshi Government and press allege that the predominantly Buddhist Burmese fear the indigenous Muslim minority in the border area and want to oust them. The Burmese operation, probably conducted in a heavy-handed manner, apparently did cause the exodus of those with no proof of Burmese citizenship. Bangladesh has further charged that atrocities committed by the Burmese military precipitated the exodus. A Burmese Government statement released last weekend, on the other hand, alleges that Bangladeshi insurgents and bandits are responsible both for the atrocities and for inciting the local Muslims to flee Burma.

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[] Bangladesh has called on the US, UN, and Islamic nations and organizations for assistance in coping with the refugee influx and in persuading Burma to take back most of the refugees. The Burmese, however, say Bangladesh is exaggerating the problem for political purposes and seem unwilling to postpone their operation.

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[] Although neither side seems to want a confrontation at this stage, Burma's determination to rid itself of the alleged aliens--coupled with Bangladesh's need to appear nationalistic and support its ethnic kin--has brought bilateral negotiations to an impasse. Moreover, reporting in the Bangladesh press of the refugees' stories of atrocities has grown increasingly hysterical, and US and UN officials in Bangladesh are expressing concern that Bangladeshi Muslims might retaliate against the nearly 80,000 Buddhists living in the border area. []

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